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| **Title** | **ARIES:** **Artificial Intelligence and Remote Sensing for Innovation Enhanced Public Services** | | |
| **Programme** | INTERREG EUROPE 2021-2027 | | |
| **Type of action** | Interregional Cooperation Project | | |
| **Call** | 3rd Call | **Deadline** | June 7th 2023 |
| **Policy objective** | 1. Smarter Europe | | |
| **Specific Objective** | i) Research and Innovation capacities, uptake of advanced technologies | | |
| **Lead Partner** | National Paying Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture, the Republic of Lithuania | | |
| **Partnership** | A partnership composed of 5-8 EU regions, covering 4 out of 5 Geographical areas:   * **North:** Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, **Lithuania**, Norway, Sweden * **East:** Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia * **South:** Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain * **West**: Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland * **Candidate countries area:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Ukraine   Eligible partners:   * Public authorities, * Public law bodies (bodies governed by public law), * Private non-profit bodies.   Policy responsible authorities have to be involved, either as partners or as associated partners. | | |
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| **Project Outline** | | | |
| **Background** | The volume and diversity of spatial and remote sensing data is exploding, the cost of acquiring and analysing it is declining, and clever applications that create value are emerging. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) have supercharged organizations’ ability to analyse vast quantities of geospatial data. Combined with the availability of new forms of data, these new solutions offer huge potential to underpin spatially targeted land use strategies. By combining data about current land use and constraints with satellite observations and remote sensing technology, it is possible to identify multifunctional land management opportunities, or model the future impact of different land use choices. Across different sectors, spatial data plays a crucial role in informed decision-making.  In the policy realm, spatial and remote sensing data helps policymakers understand the spatial distribution of populations, plan for infrastructure development and manage natural resources effectively. Specifically, reliable data and tools are needed to develop Statutory instruments that regulate land use at municipal level giving obligations and rights to landowners. At the same time, they are needed for national and regional policies on urban and rural development and planning, affecting public services in sectors such as agriculture, environmental protection and infrastructure.  In some organizations, this capacity would be housed as a multidisciplinary team combining traditional IT skills (cybersecurity, data privacy, infrastructure management) with specialized science skills (geography, engineering, cartography, computer science) critical for understanding and unlocking insights from geospatial data. In the public sector, geospatial practitioners are increasingly becoming the foundation for data-driven organizations and reporting to or working closely with chief data officers to ensure land management systems facilitate socio-economic development of the entire country, and rational spatial planning ensures fair access to a safe environment for all citizens. | | |

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| **Objectives** | The common challenge addressed by ARIES project is adopting new technologies that allow public services to adapt to increasing volumes of available data and respond to social challenges. This is further amplified by the need to provide less bureaucratic and more cost-efficient services, which poses requirements for the new solutions.  Under the overall objective to improve regional development policies and programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal, ARIES intentds to boost uptake of existing digital innovations by the public sector on the national scale, stimulate transregional collaboration and harness opportunities and mitigate risks to ensure sustainable and inclusive public sector transformation.  Specific objectives:   1. Conduct regional analysis of the spatial and satellite data usage across land management sectors, evaluating the existing support measures under the policies and regulatory framework. 2. Mobilise relevant stakeholders at the regional level in order to include their contributions in the development of the respective Policy Instruments or Action Plans. 3. Carry out the exchange of experiences among European regions where new digital technologies are already in service of responsive and cost-effective public services and those where there is yet to be a framework for implementing new solutions, kickstart the interregional learning among project partners and regional stakeholders. 4. Carry out the strategic thinking processes at regional level in order to identify the relevant measures (from the interregional learning process) to be integrated into the national policies, the activities needed for this integration, timeframe and responsible actors. 5. Design and develop action plans that best complement the policies at national and regional level related to the spatial and satellite data usage. Promote benefits from related public services with particular relevance to increased welfare and rural development. 6. Improve regional industrial cooperation and collaboration by supporting development and deployment of new technologies and the application of new business models, reduce regional exclusion and increase productivity. 7. Follow up on the advancements in the regulatory framework and monitor policy fora. |
| **Approach** | The following phases better describe the approach of ARIES in developing Policy Instruments or Action Plans.   1. Strengthen stakeholder participation   Identify and involve a diverse range of stakeholders from the public services and digital technologies. Use a mix of online and offline engagement methods to reach out to stakeholders and ensure their participation. Provide training and support to stakeholders to ensure they can effectively contribute to the consultation process. Ensure that stakeholders are aware of how their feedback will be used to develop the Policy Instruments or Action Plans.   1. Enhance systemic transformation   Conduct a thorough SWOT analysis of the spatial data value chain and the potential for introducing innovative digital tools in public services, including identifying all relevant stakeholders, their needs and challenges, potential digital technology tools, uptake processes and resulting benefits and value-added products. Identify gaps and opportunities in existing policy measures, programmes and models in the participating regions. Develop a framework that allows for the identification of synergies and complementarities between these policy measures, programmes and models. Develop a set of indicators to track the performance of systemic improvements over time.   1. Enable uptake of results   Identify and involve local champions who can drive the implementation of the Action Plans in their respective regions. Contribute to a platform that facilitates the sharing of intergovernmental data, best practices and experiences among the participating regions. Foster cross-border collaboration to promote the sharing of knowledge and resources among regions. Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework that allows for the continuous assessment of the Action Plans impact at both the national and EU level. |
| **Work Plan** | A detailed work plan will be defined upon completion of the consortium.  Core Phase 3 years  Exchange of experiences, learning and transferring of the use of innovative tools and good practices will be the core activities in the first three years of the project. These activities contribute to increasing the professional capacity of the people and institutions participating in projects to integrate the lessons learned from cooperation into regional development policies. **Study Visits** will be organised with the participation of regional stakeholders plus the organisation’s own staff. The Study Visits will allow partners to investigate in-depth the existing “Good Practices” of the host region, with parallel **Peer Review workshops** on each partners’ policies and common debriefing sessions. The interregional learning process will be carried out in parallel with the strategic thinking process at the regional level in a continuous iteration process throughout the Core phase as a result of the interregional learning process. Partners in charge of the addressed policy instruments will identify the relevant experiences to integrate into their regional policies, the activities needed for this integration and responsible actors leading to performing the **change of such instruments** and/or to the design of Action Plans.  Follow up phase 1 year  Dedicated to monitoring the first effects of the policy improvements and whether additional policy improvements are achieved.  The main outputs will be:  **Diagnosis reports** - Identify the key skills that public services employees need to improve to implement the new technologies, consider the needs of different regions for various technologies, and identify key tools that meet the particular challenges such as monitoring and compliance for CAP payments, land management and spatial planning for infrastructure projects, and land consolidation potential in peripheral local governments.  **Good Practice Guide -** Inventory of existing digital tools, methods, programmes, management and governance models used by the respective authorities in participating EU regions with a special focus on AI and EO tools and their goodness of fit to the specific sector. Existing methodologies for updating the RIS3 according to changes in prioritised sectors and technological domains will also be inventoried.  **Regional Policy Briefs** with recommendations and methodology guidance, disseminating the support measures identified for enhancing public services in the land management sector, targeting the relevant public authorities and policy-makers.  **Action Plans** - long-term development strategy with the objective of increasing use of spatial data and modelling tools to support strategic decisions about some of the countries’ most pressing land use challenges. |

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| **Project’s**  **length** | 48 Months   * Core phase: 36 months * Follow-up phase: 12 months |
| **Budget and Co-financing rate** | Project budget: 1.000.000 € - 2.000.000 €. Co-financing ERDF rate:   * 80% for Public bodies and bodies governed by public law from all 27 EU member states * 70% for Private non-profit bodies from all 27 EU member states Average budget per partner: 200.000-250.000€ |